



# **Know your Rights**

16 or 17 and homeless?

# Am I homeless?

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You don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be homeless. If you are staying somewhere you have no legal right to stay, (like a friends house), or somewhere it is not safe for you (where people are violent), then you are homeless.

# Who can help?

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**Childrens Social Care** must help most homeless 16 and 17 year olds. It is part of the County Council and used to be called Social Services.

In an emergency they can help find somewhere safe for you to stay the night.

## **District Council Housing Options**

help people who are homeless. If it is an emergency, they can also help you to find somewhere safe to stay that night.

**Independent Advice Services** like Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau can help you understand your rights and challenge decisions you think are wrong.

# **What if Children's Social Care won't help me?**

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Get independent advice as soon as you can. Meanwhile go to the council and speak to someone from the Housing Options Team. Tell them you are homeless.

# What help can I get from Children's Services?

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Children's Services will do an assessment to see if you are a 'child in need' (this legal term covers young people too). If they agree you are, they can help you to:

*find a place to live - tackle personal issues*  
*- get into education or training*

# **What if I don't want help from Childrens Social Care?**

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Some young people don't like the idea of being involved with Children's Services. You don't have to agree to it, but they can help with all your issues – not just housing. If you don't want this help, you need to go to Housing Options

# **Will they tell me to go back home?**

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Whoever you go to will want to check if you can go back home, because it isn't easy living on your own at 16 and 17. Housing options and Children's Services have people who can talk to you and your parent(s) to see if you can sort things out



but you cannot be forced to go back home, especially if it isn't safe for you because of violence or abuse. That's why it is important for you to tell the worker about these things. Even if you and your parent(s) agree to talk, the council should still give you a place to stay while this is being sorted out.

16 or 17, and have nowhere to stay tonight?  
You have two choices:

Go to Children's  
Services, there are  
offices in all the  
districts

Go to Housing  
Options/Advice  
team at your  
local council

They will talk to your family to see if you can  
go back home, but cannot make you go if it  
is not safe. If you can't go back:

Children's Services  
will carry out a  
'child in need'  
assessment, ('child  
in need' is a  
legal term) and  
should offer you  
somewhere to stay  
in the meantime. If  
not, go to Housing  
Options for a

Housing  
Options/Advice will  
arrange a place for  
you to stay and tell  
Children's Services  
that you need a  
'child in need'  
assessment,  
unless you say you  
don't want one (see  
Top tip 3 at the

place to stay and tell them you are homeless and need urgent advice (see Top tip 2 at the back of this leaflet)

back of this leaflet). Sometimes this assessment will be done by them together.

After the assessment you will be told if they think you are a 'child in need' or not. If:

If you don't want an assessment

Yes

No

Children's Services are now responsible for finding you somewhere to live, paying for it and giving you other support with your education and training (see Top tip 3)

Housing Options/Advice decide if they are responsible for finding you somewhere to live. If they make a decision you disagree with, get advice (see Top tip 2)

Whichever route you take, you should end up with somewhere safe to live. If this isn't the case, get advice (see Top tip 2).

## Top tip 1

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We have a specialist housing advice team who will help homeless young people. Ask your Youth Support Service worker, or call into one of the drop in offices in your district.

## Top tip 2

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If you are confused or unhappy with what is happening, get advice from Shelter, a Citizens Advice Bureau or other agency or contact Shelter's helpline 0808 800 4444 (open daily from 8am, free to call from main UK mobile networks).

## Top tip 3

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Why have an assessment? If you are a 'child in need' under section 20 of the Children Act, Children's Services has a duty to help you find a place to live, pay for it, and help with education and training. In some cases, you have a right to this help until 21 or 24. These are important rights. Don't refuse an assessment without getting advice on what it really means for you.

# Useful Contacts

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## **District Councils**

Cheltenham Borough Council:	01242 775168
Cotswold District Council:	01285 623300
Forest of Dean District Council:	01594 810000
Gloucester City Council:	01452 396567
Stroud District Council:	01453 754078
Tewkesbury Borough Council:	01684 272212

## **Children's Services**

Central Referral Hub:	01452 426565
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## **Youth Housing Advice Service**

Duty Desk:	01452 551276
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## **Other useful contacts**

ASTRA , Alternative solutions to running away	0800 3894992
Childline free phone line	0800 1111
Shelter National free phone housing advice help line	0808 800 4444



**A partnership between Gloucestershire County Council  
and District Councils.**